

Anita Prior Bullard

This interview was taken in 1986. It is about Anita and her family. She resides in Demster in the homestead on county route 6. Her mother and father were the first members of her family to come to the New Haven area. They came around 1895 when her father became railroad agent at the Demster station. They settled in the house where Anita now lives.

Her father was Edward Prior, born in Michigan on June 5, 1872. His grandfather Prior was a banker in Michigan. His grandmother Prior divorced her husband and came east. Later she married John Seaman from Parish, New York. Her maiden name was Allen. Anita says she was very stylish but quite heavy. In Parish cemetery there is a large Seaman monument, which is Anita's step grandfather. Mr. Prior, her father died May 17 1956. Her mother was Mildred Getman Prior born Nov. 22, 1879 in Palermo, New York. She died July 28, 1946 at Demster. Mr. and Mrs. Prior were married in Palermo at her home. They honeymooned in New York City.

Anita was born in Demster Aug. 20, 1911. She attended the Stone School District for the first eight grades, and then took two years of High School at New Haven. Walking to school every day. Her last two years of High School was at Mexico High School where she graduated as Salutatorian of her class. Robert Buck had 4/10 th of a point more than her, so he was Valedictorian. She took the train to Mexico and walked to school. School hours were from 9AM to 4 PM. Subjects were about the same as now, that is the main subjects. School taxes have increased an awful lot since then. Anita went to Syracuse University in 1929, graduating in 1933. Got her Masters Degree in 1934.

Anita has one sister Dale, born May 28, 1917 at Demster. Dale married David Clark and lives in Bayberry, near Liverpool, New York. Anita says Dale was a pretty girl.

Some games Anita remembers playing when she was younger, were called Prisoners Goal and Finch (card game). Says there was lots of snow and ice then. They had a coal furnace. She used to read any book she could get a hold of in the neighborhood. Remembers reading; Seven Little Peppers and How They Grew, Bobbsie Twins, Tom Swift and His Flying Machine, Little Men, Little Women, Pecks Bad Boy, Bunny Brown and his Sister Sue. Read all the books Mrs. Miller, who ran the hotel, had on her shelves. Anita always called her Auntie Miller.

Byron and Auntie Miller were the first owners that Anita remembers of running the hotel, later known as Clemons Store. The Millers had a daughter Gladys and a son (she couldn't remember his name). She said Mr. Miller had a beautiful horse. She remembers rides in the cutter on rough roads. Some of her neighbors, besides the Millers, were the Webster's, The Baumgarsner, the DeMars, the Masons. Also the Stones lived across the tracks. Mr. Baumgaraner sold Insurance, Also had a grocery store in Demster. Lloyd Webster ran a grocery store too. Mrs. Florence Webster died in the Flu epidemic. Mr. Leavitt ran a feed store. There was a Post Office in Demster, the post mistress being a Mrs. Parsons. Anita used to visit her a lot and sometimes would invite her to supper before checking with her mother first. She says the neighbors visited more than they do now.

She doesn't recall when they first got electricity, but sometime while she was attending the Mexico school, maybe mid 20's. Said they had pretty chandeliers.

During World War I the ladies would meet at Millers Hotel and make bandages. President Taft and President Filmore were two of the presidents that visited New Haven. President Roosevelt passed through on the train and waved from the back of the train.

The only talented person she could remember of knowing was Lillian Mack Spencer. The only murder she remembered was the Gero family.

Her parents used to take the 4:00 train to Oswego for groceries and take the 6:00 train back. She remembers of going to the Chicago World Fair with her mother and Dale when she was about 15 years old.

They always went to church on Sundays. Doesn't remember anything special about Easter or Birthdays. Thanksgiving Day they always had a big dinner. Lots of fireworks on the 4th of July. There was always a parade on Memorial Day at New Haven. Remembers having to recite Flanders Field and speak. Christmas was always a big event. Got a new doll every year. Her mother used to make clothes for the dolls. In her stockings she got Oranges, candy and nuts. Went to her grandmothers every Christmas.

Lois Webster and Anita were two of the fastest strawberry pickers around. Lois was better than her. In the 20's and 30's she picked all around the neighborhood. Al Tucker's and several other places, she couldn't remember them all.

Anita was a schoolteacher for 32 years. She taught in Sherwood, New York, Liberty, Oakfield and Altmar, Parish and Williamtown. She was head of English at A.P.W. and Oakfield. She was an English Professor at Oswego State Teachers College for several years. The person that influenced her the most was her father, he taught her the value of time. She said the greatest experience in her life was being initiated into Phi Beta Kappa, the highest honorary Fraternity in the country. She worked for Jewel Tea Company after World War II.

Anita remembers her father having a cow and a calf. Her mother canned the meat, also they had hens. Had a horse named Jenny. Had 100 cherry trees on their property when she was 12 or 13 years old. Raised raspberries. Raised Astors and shipped them to New York City. She remembers seeing seven carloads of strawberries at one time at the railroad station.

Anita Prior married John Bullard on Nov. 6, 1940. They had one daughter Joan born July 5, 1942. Joan is head of Public Relations at Universal Studios in Hollywood. She is unmarried.

Mr. Edward Prior, Anita's father, left his home in Parish, New York at the age of 12 years. He worked on a farm, but couldn't do the work. He went to business school in Syracuse. He was a very ambitious person. He was 2nd Trip Operator on the railroad at Lacona. He was a car dealer. Some cars retailed for about \$500 to \$600. He sold Willys knight and Wills Overhead (had sleeve valve motor). He had car show rooms all around here, Pulaski, Fulton, Oswego, and Mexico. He sold the first truck in New York State. He sold pianos. Was contractor in Pickle Factory in Demster. Was Railroad Agent at Demster. Mr. Prior started the Farmers & Traders Insurance Company at the Dempster Station. He created it and held meetings at the station. C.Sidney Shephard influenced him very much. Anita said C. Sidney Shepard was a nice man.

Mrs. Mildred Prior, Anita's mother, was a schoolteacher, having taught at the Stone School in Demster at one time. She was chosen Beauty Queen at the Sandy Creek Fair a year or so before she was married. She was a pretty lady. Mr. and Mrs. Prior are buried in the New Haven Cemetery.

At Demster there was a Pickle Factory, two Milk Houses, and icehouses. Anita remembers in the 1920's of seeing the icehouses full. Mr. Harry Kasley ran an Apple Dryer. He was one of the richest men around.